

# **UNEMPLOYED PEOPLE'S MOVEMENT** **(UPM)**

"We call upon the right to work..."

69 "C" Nompondo Street, Gehamstown, 6139

Contacts: 072 299 5253, 078 625 6462, 073 578 3661

Email: [xola.mali@yahoo.com](mailto:xola.mali@yahoo.com), [ayandakota@webmail.co.za](mailto:ayandakota@webmail.co.za)



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## **SOCIAL MOVEMENTS ARE FIGHTING FOR A GOOD CAUSE - WE ARE NOT CRIMINALS**

Unemployment is hovering at around 70 percent in Grahamstown. The most affected are young people, including graduates. Unemployment in Grahamstown has increased in the past few years. Several industries that provided employment have closed down. These include the railway industry: the line between Grahamstown and Alicedale, which used to be the core railway junction in South Africa before the mid-1990's, was closed down. A kaolin (white clay used in the manufacture of ceramics, medicine, coated paper, in toothpaste, light bulbs, cosmetics and porcelain) processing factory was also closed down. The Municipality now exports kaolin, in the process making jobs outside Grahamstown. A poultry firm has also been closed down. The Makana Municipality is not creating any labour absorbing activities to absorb the unemployment created by the closure of these industries.

The services sector in Grahamstown, such as Rhodes University and the Grahamstown Arts Festival, has not created enough jobs to compensate. Jobs that are created usually require specific skills or are temporary or casual in nature. This sector has not done enough to address the plight of the unemployed. The scale of human suffering this problem is causing must not be underestimated. The rate of crime has increased, especially in the township. The liquor and drugs industries are the fastest growing industries. There have been a number of suicide cases, and some unemployed people have died due to stress. Families are breaking down, and women and children are being abused.

The Auditor General's report which was tabled at a special council meeting last month revealed that Makana Municipality did not account for at least R26-million and that it did not claim for VAT input on the expenditure incurred during that financial year.

Grahamstown's ostrich product exporters, have conducted tests over the last two years and found that chlorine levels in the local water have been erratic and at times fall below the level which keeps our drinking water bacteria-free. If chlorine levels drop below the standard, the amount of bacteria will increase and drinking it could lead to illness and disease. In the Makana region over November and December there were a total of 25 infant deaths due to diarrhoea, according to the municipality's account at the recent social services, community empowerment and protection services meeting.

There is backlog in service delivery. RDP house in Vukani are falling down due to inferior quality and poor workmanship. The problem with the houses is structural, weak bricks, leaking water pipes, roofs, drains and toilets. The story of RDP houses in our area is a story of fraud, general mismanagement and corruption. When we approached the municipality that the roofs are leaking we were given black plastic bags to cover the roofs. On the 25<sup>th</sup> February we lost Comrade Nomiki Ncamiso, she died due to pneumonia related illness. She lived in Vukani in a house that was hit by tornado, the wall fell on her and she was given a black plastic bag by Makana Municipality for replacement of the wall. The roof is crumbling down and the whole house will fall anytime soon. She died fighting with the Makana Municipality, demanding that the RDP houses be repaired fearing for the health of her family and children who may get TB or pneumonia due to cold. She knew little that she will be the first victim.

When we go to the streets and stage gatherings, demanding service delivery, we are shot with rubber bullets, we are pepper sprayed and we are jailed. The president of this country calls us criminals. The police have been given the right to shoot and kill us. Our comrades in Balfour are in hiding because the police are looking for them and they will be shot and killed. Their families have been harassed and tortured. Our comrades in Durban, Abahlali baseMjondolo are constantly under siege from the ruling party and government syndicates. Comrades in Western Cape have been abducted and tortured for no apparent reason. Comrade Nozipho Mnteshana was placed under house arrest for the period of not less than 18 months, to frustrate her and her children, reason for leading the march of the unemployed people in Durban. We have witnessed kids being shot and wounded in these demonstrations.

This is the admission that this society continue to be entangled in an insoluble contradiction with itself that it is left into irreconcilable antagonisms that it is powerless to dispel. A state must preserve the status quo; the state must protect the property clause enshrined in the constitution. The state is the institution of violence.

We are not criminals but criminals are those who want to bind us to perpetual servitude. Tenderpreneurs who profited from more than R130m worth of tenders in just two years are criminals; it is Malemas of this world who should be jailed not us. It is the construction company that built Vukani houses that must be jailed not us. It is the corrupt government officials, from Zuma to the councillor in Grahamstown that must be jailed not us. They profited from more than R38 billion tenders of Arms Deal, they profited from the travel gate scandal and they continue to plunder the resources of our country.

The courage and determination of the struggle during the apartheid must serve as an example to the oppressive regime of the Zuma administration that the more you suppress the people the more they resist. It is through those struggle that we have the Zuma administration today and it is through the street protest and mass mobilization that we

will topple this capitalist government and the tenderpreneurs that defend it in the language of the left.

As social movements we can learn from such struggles by re-examining the programme, strategy and tactics, learn from the experience, the triumphs and failures and see how we can apply these lessons today.

We are not criminals but we are in a cause to retaliate against syndicates who are looting our resources, we are retaliating against government thugs and mafias who are enriching themselves under the pretext that they did not join the struggle to be poor, so we did not join the struggle to enrich the few. We remain true soldiers who are committed to the question of truth.

Ayanda Kota  
Unemployed People's Movement,  
Chairperson  
0786256462  
ayandakota@webmail.co.za